Japan Protests Over French Fukushima Cartoon

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TOKYO (AP) — Japan lodged a protest Thursday against a French newspaper cartoon depicting sumo wrestlers with extra limbs fighting in front of the country's crippled nuclear power plant and linking it to Tokyo's successful bid to host the 2020 Olympics.

In this Tuesday, Sept. 10, 2013 file photo, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga speaks at the first Cabinet meeting on decommissioning nuclear reactors and control of radiation-contaminated water leak at the tsunami-crippled Fukushima Dai-ich nuclear power plant, at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo. Suga said Thursday, Sept. 12, 2013 that Tokyo was to formally complain the weekly paper Le Canard Enchaine over a cartoon which he said insulted those affected by the March 2011 disaster. He said the expression misrepresented Fukushima's plant conditions. The French newspaper cartoon is depicting sumo wrestlers with extra limbs fighting in front of the crippled nuclear power plant and linking it to Tokyo's successful bid to host the 2020 Olympics. **(AP Photo/Itsuo Inouye, Pool)**

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said Tokyo planned to formally complain to the weekly paper Le Canard Enchaine via the Japanese Embassy in France. He said the cartoon insulted those affected by the March 2011 disaster and misrepresented conditions at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant.

The plant's recent leaks of radioactive water into the Pacific have triggered international concerns.

One of the cartoons published Wednesday shows two sumo wrestlers, each with an extra arm and leg, facing off with the nuclear plant in the background, as a pair of spectators in hazmat suits and full-face masks watched the match from outside the ring.

Another cartoon in the same paper showed two people wearing hazmat suits and holding dosimeters standing at the poolside, with a phrase next to it saying

Fukushima already has an Olympic-size pool.

Japanese officials have acknowledged that radiation-contaminated ground water has been leaking from the plant from soon after the March 2011 crisis. The recent string of leaks from storage tanks holding radioactive water have added to fears.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe assured the International Olympic Committee hours before the Sept. 8 vote that the leaks were "under control."

In order to calm international concerns about the water problem that escalated just before the Olympic vote, Japan's government said it was getting more directly involved in the plant's water management and announced public funding of some costly measures to contain the leaks.

A Foreign Ministry official later Thursday confirmed that Japan has submitted an official complaint to the paper's chief editor Louis Marie Horeau through its embassy in Paris. The ministry official said the paper did not apologize, but acknowledged that Japan was upset over them.

In his final presentation to the Olympic committee hours before Tokyo won the bid, Abe also said that the leak is "completely blocked" within the bay surrounding the plant, raising questions at home about the accuracy of those comments.

TEPCO spokesman Noriyuki Imaizumi acknowledged this week that the leak has not been completely contained by protective fences installed just off the coast.

Experts say radioactivity becomes diluted quickly as it spreads further offshore where global environmental impact is negligible.

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